M. J. Harrison. 1925.

OLTON POOLS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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SWORDS AND PLOUGHSHARES. 1915
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Olton Pools

by John Drinkwater

John Drinkwater
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TO

EDMUND GOSSE

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OLTON POOLS

Dedication

TO E. G.

I

SOMETIMES youth comes to age and asks a blessing,
Or counsel, or a tale of old estate,
Yet youth will still be curiously guessing
The old man's thought when death is at his gate;
For all their courteous words they are not one,
This youth and age, but civil strangers still,
Age with the best of all his seasons done,
Youth with his face towards the upland hill.
Age looks for rest while youth runs far and wide,
Age talks with death, which is youth's very fear,
Age knows so many comrades who have died,
Youth burns that one companion is so dear.
So, with good will, and in one house, may dwell
These two, and talk, and all be yet to tell.

II

But there are men who, in the time of age,
Sometimes remember all that age forgets:
The early hope, the hardly compassed wage,
The change of corn, and snow, and violets;
They are glad of praise; they know this morning brings
As true a song as any yesterday;
Their labour still is set to many things,
They cry their questions out along the way.
They give as who may gladly take again
Some gift at need; they move with gallant ease
Among all eager companies of men;
And never signed of age are such as these.
They speak with youth, and never speak amiss;
Of such are you; and what is youth but this?

BIRTHRIGHT

Lord Rameses of Egypt sighed
  Because a summer evening passed;
And little Ariadne cried
  That summer fancy fell at last
To dust; and young Verona died
  When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
  Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
  To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
  And little Ariadne sleep.

ANTAGONISTS

Green shoots, we break the morning earth
  And flourish in the morning's breath;
We leave the agony of birth
  And soon are all midway to death.

While yet the summer of her year
  Brings life her marvels, she can see
Far off the rising dust, and hear
  The footfall of her enemy.

OLTON POOLS

(TO G. C. G.)

Now June walks on the waters,
And the cuckoo's last enchantment
Passes from Olton pools.

Now dawn comes to my window
Breathing midsummer roses,
And scythes are wet with dew.

Is it not strange for ever
That, bowered in this wonder,
Man keeps a jealous heart? . . .

That June and the June waters,
And birds and dawn-lit roses,
Are gospels in the wind,

Fading upon the deserts,
Poor pilgrim revelations? . . .
Hist . . . over Olton pools!

THEY ALSO SERVE

Bride birds among your leaves to-day
  Watching from England green,
Your mates have gone what sorrier way,
  And you, what have you seen ?—

Of all things known but this you know—
  Against the falling night
The myriad mates for ever go,
  Upon some alien flight.

Hushed upon frosty trees you wait
  That paragon of springs,
When seaward shall the sound be great
  Of fond returning wings.

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Long since the sorrows of the nightingales
Came throbbing through the night to lattices
Where women watched whose amours had made rich
The days of soldiers now gone out in mail
And carven plate, with battleaxe and bow,
Faring and fallen, or happily to be
Home on some twilight road, a lonely spear. . . .

Long since, that so these ladies and their loves,
And casements looking on to battlefields
Where still a loyal crest might wear a rose,
Have perished, or grown fabulous, all song,
Or mist of mummers, or a crazy tale
For those book-learnèd fools who miss the world. . . .

There is a wood in Warwickshire to-day,
Haunted and hushed with midnight nightingales—
O summer song. And there are fields of France,
And fields, O love, by many an alien sea. . . .

CLOUDS

Because a million voices call
  Across the earth distractedly,
Because the thrones of reason fall
  And beautiful battalions die,
My mind is like a madrigal
  Played on a lute long since put by.

In common use my mind is still
  Eager for every lovely thing—
The solitudes of tarn and hill,
  Bright birds with honesty to sing,
Bluebells and primroses that spill
  Cascades of colour on the spring.

But now my mind that gave to these
  Gesture and shape, colour and song,
Goes hesitant and ill at ease,
  And the old touch is truant long,
Because the continents and seas
  Are loud with lamentable wrong.

NINETEEN-FIFTEEN

On a ploughland hill against the sky,
Over the barley, over the rye,
Time, which is now a black pine tree,
Holds out his arms and mocks at me—

" In the year of your Lord nineteen-fifteen
The acres are ploughed and the acres are green,
And the calves and the lambs and the foals are
born,
But man the angel is all forlorn.

" The cropping cattle, the swallow's wing,
The wagon team and the pasture spring,
Move in their seasons and are most wise,
But man, whose image is in the skies,

" Who is master of all, whose hand achieves
The church and the barn and the homestead
eaves—
How are the works of his wisdom seen
In the year of your Lord nineteen-fifteen ? "

RIDDLES, R.F.C.*

(1916)

He was a boy of April beauty; one
Who had not tried the world; who, while the sun
Flamed yet upon the eastern sky, was done.

Time would have brought him in her patient ways—
So his young beauty spoke—to prosperous days,
To fulness of authority and praise.

He would not wait so long. A boy, he spent
His boy's dear life for England. Be content:
No honour of age had been more excellent.

* Lieut. Stewart G. Ridley, Royal Flying Corps, sacrificed his life in the Egyptian desert in an attempt to save a comrade. He was twenty years of age.

FOR APRIL 23RD

1616—1916

One thing to-day
For England let us pray—
That, when this bitterness of blood is spent,
Out of the darkness of the discontent
Perplexing man with man, poor pride with pride,
Shall come to her, and loverly abide,
Sure knowledge that these lamentable days
Were given to death and the bewildered praise
Of dear young limbs and eager eyes forestilled,
That in her home, where Shakespeare's passion grew
From song to song, should thrive the happy-willed
Free life that Shakespeare drew.

SEPTEMBER

Wind and the robin's note to-day
Have heard of autumn and betray
  The green long reign of summer.
The rust is falling on the leaves,
September stands beside the sheaves,
  The new, the happy comer.

Not sad my season of the red
And russet orchards gaily spread
  From Cholesbury to Cooming,
Nor sad when twilit valley trees
Are ships becalmed on misty seas,
  And beetles go abooming.

Now soon shall come the morning crowds
Of starlings, soon the coloured clouds
  From oak and ash and willow,
And soon the thorn and briar shall be
Rich in their crimson livery,
  In scarlet and in yellow.

Spring laughed and thrilled a million veins,
And summer shone above her rains
  To fill September's faring;
September talks as kings who know
The world's way and superbly go
  In robes of wisdom's wearing.

SUNRISE ON RYDAL WATER

(TO E. DE S.)

COME down at dawn from windless hills
  Into the valley of the lake,
Where yet a larger quiet fills
  The hour, and mist and water make
    With rocks and reeds and island boughs
    One silence and one element,
    Where wonder goes surely as once
    It went
      By Galilean prows.

Moveless the water and the mist,
  Moveless the secret air above,
Hushed, as upon some happy tryst
  The poised expectancy of love;
    What spirit is it that adores
    What mighty presence yet unseen?
    What consummation works apace
    Between
      These rapt enchanted shores?

Never did virgin beauty wake
  Devouter to the bridal feast
Than moves this hour upon the lake
  In adoration to the east;
    Here is the bride a god may know,
    The primal will, the young consent,
    Till surely upon the appointed mood
    Intent
      The god shall leap—and, lo,

Over the lake's end strikes the sun,
White, flameless fire; some purity
Thrilling the mist, a splendour won
Out of the world's heart. Let there be
Thoughts, and atonements, and desires,
Proud limbs, and undeliberate tongue,
Where now we move with mortal oars
Among
Immortal dews and fires.

So the old mating goes apace,
Wind with the sea, and blood with thought,
Lover with lover; and the grace
Of understanding comes unsought
When stars into the twilight steer,
Or thrushes build among the may,
Or wonder moves between the hills,
And day
Comes up on Rydal mere.

WORDSWORTH AT GRASMERE

These hills and waters fostered you
  Abiding in your argument
Until all comely wisdom drew
  About you, and the years were spent.

Now over hill and water stays
  A world more intimately wise,
Built of your dedicated days,
  And seen in your beholding eyes.

So, marvellous and far, the mind,
  That slept among them when began
Waters and hills, leaps up to find
  Its kingdom in the thought of man.

WRITTEN AT LUDLOW CASTLE

(IN THE HALL WHERE COMUS WAS FIRST PERFORMED)

WHERE wall and sill and broken window-frame
Are bright with flowers unroofed against the skies,
And nothing but the nesting jackdaws' cries
Breaks the hushed even, once imperial came
The muse that moved transfiguring the name
Of Puritan, and beautiful and wise
The verses fell, forespeaking Paradise,
And poetry set all this hall aflame.

Now silence has come down upon the place
Where life and song so wonderfully went,
And the mole's afoot now where that passion rang,
Yet Comus now first moves his laurelled pace,
For song and life for ever are unspent,
And they are more than ghosts who lived and sang.

HOLINESS

If all the carts were painted gay,
  And all the streets swept clean,
And all the children came to play
  By hollyhocks, with green
  Grasses to grow between,

If all the houses looked as though
  Some heart were in their stones,
If all the people that we know
  Were dressed in scarlet gowns,
  With feathers in their crowns,

I think this gaiety would make
  A spiritual land.
I think that holiness would take
  This laughter by the hand,
  Till both should understand.

THE CITY

A SHINING city, one
Happy in snow and sun,
And singing in the rain
A paradisal strain. . . .
Here is a dream to keep,
O Builders, from your sleep.

O foolish Builders, wake,
Take your trowels, take
The poet's dream, and build
The city song has willed,
That every stone may sing
And all your roads may ring
With happy wayfaring.

DAFFODILS

Again, my man of Lady Street,
Your daffodils have come, the sweet
Bell daffodils that are aglow
In Ryton woods now, where they go
Who are my friends and make good rhymes.

They come, these very daffodils,
From that same flight of Gloucester hills,
Where Dymock dames and Dymock men
Have cider kegs and flocks in pen,
For I've been there a thousand times.

Your petals are enchanted still
As when those tongues of Orphic skill
Bestowed upon that Ryton earth
A benediction for your birth,
Sun-daffodils that now I greet.

Because, brave daffodils, you bring
Colour and savour of a spring
That Ryton blood is quick to tell,
You should be borne, if all were well,
In golden carts to Lady Street.

JOHN'S TUNE

(TO A. J. G. AND J. E. S.)

Now God be praised who gives us light,
  And hills on which the light may fall,
And a song to sing at the end of the night
  When over the paddocks the starlings call.

The sun is waiting in the sky
  And surely has but kind to say,
And with never a cloud for company,
  So come, and we'll travel away to-day.

A road for you, a hill for me,
  A river Joe may shine upon,
Never has been such luck of three
  Since first went walking any John.

Shake out your stars from pockets lined
  With pence enough for pilgrimage,
Not one of us all but has a mind
  Fit to challenge the earth's old age.

TO THE DEFILERS

Go, thieves, and take your riches, creep
  To corners out of honest sight;
We shall not be so poor to keep
  One thought of envy or despite.

But know that in sad surety when
  Your sullen will betrays this earth
To sorrows of contagion, then
  Beelzebub renews his birth.

When you defile the pleasant streams
  And the wild bird's abiding-place,
You massacre a million dreams
  And cast your spittle in God's face.

ANTHONY CRUNDLE

Here lies the body of
ANTHONY CRUNDLE,
Farmer, of this parish,
Who died in 1849 *at the age of* 82.
"He delighted in music."
R. I. P.

And of
SUSAN,
For fifty-three years his wife,
Who died in 1860, *aged* 86.

ANTHONY CRUNDLE of Dorrington Wood
Played on a piccolo. Lord was he,
For seventy years, of sheaves that stood
Under the perry and cider tree;
Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

And because he prospered with sickle and scythe,
With cattle afield and labouring ewe,
Anthony was uncommonly blithe,
And played of a night to himself and Sue;
Anthony Crundle, eighty-two.

The earth to till, and a tune to play,
And Susan for fifty years and three,
And Dorrington Wood at the end of day . . .
May providence do no worse by me;
Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

OLD OLIVER

Old Oliver, my uncle, went
With but a penny for his needs,
Walking from Cotsall hill to Clent,
His pocket full of poppy seeds.

And every little lane along
He scattered them for good man's will,
And then he sang a happy song
From Clent again to Cotsall hill.

DERBYSHIRE SONG

Come loving me to Darley Dale
  In spring time or sickle time,
And we will make as proud a tale
  As lovers in the antique prime
Of Harry or Elizabeth.

With kirtle green and nodding flowers
  To deck my hair and little waist,
I'll be worth a lover's hours. . . .
  Come, fellow, thrive, there is no haste
But soon is worn away in death.

Soon shall the blood be tame, and soon
  Our bodies lie in Darley Dale,
Unreckoning of jolly June,
  With tongues past telling any tale;
My man, come loving me to-day.

I have a wrist is smooth and brown,
  I have a shoulder smooth and white,
I have my grace in any gown
  By sun or moon or candle-light. . . .
Come Darley way, come Darley way.

MILLERS DALE

Barefoot we went by Millers Dale
When meadowsweet was golden gloom
And happy love was in the vale
Singing upon the summer bloom
Of gipsy crop and branches laid
Of willows over chanting pools,
Barefoot by Millers Dale we made
Our summer festival of fools.

Folly bright-eyed, and quick, and young
Was there with all his silly plots,
And trotty wagtail stepped among
The delicate forget-me-nots,
And laughter played with us above
The rocky shelves and weeded holes
And we had fellowship to love
The pigeons and the water-voles.

Time soon shall be when we are all
Stiller than ever runs the Wye,
And every bitterness shall fall
To-morrow in obscurity,
And wars be done, and treasons fail,
Yet shall new friends go down to greet
The singing rocks of Millers Dale,
And willow pools and meadowsweet

TO THE LOVERS THAT COME AFTER US

Lovers, a little of this your happy time
  Give to the thought of us who were as you,
That we, whose dearest passion in your prime
  Is but a winter garment, may renew
Our love in yours, our flesh in your desire,
  Our tenderness in your discovering kiss,
For we are half the fuel of your fire,
  As ours was fed by Marc and Beatrice.
Remember us, and, when you too are dead,
  Our prayer with yours shall fall upon love's spring
That all our ghostly loves be comforted
  In those yet later lovers' love-making;
So shall oblivion bring his dust to spill
On brain and limbs, and we be lovers still.

LOVE IN OCTOBER

(TO K.)

THE fields, the clouds, the farms and farming
gear,
The drifting kine, the scarlet apple-trees . . .
Not of the sun but separate are these,
And individual joys, and very dear;
Yet when the sun is folded, they are here
No more, the drifting skies: the argosies
Of wagoned apples: still societies
Of elms: red cattle on the stubbled year.

So are you not love's whole estate. I owe
In many hearts more dues than I shall pay;
Yet is your heart the spring of all love's light,
And should your love weary of me and go
With all its thriving beams out of my day,
These many loves would founder in that night.

DEFIANCE

O WIDE the way your beauty goes,
For all its feigned indifference,
And every folly's path it knows,
And every humour of pretence.

But I can be as false as are
The rainbow loves which are your days,
And I will gladly go and far,
Content with your immediate praise.

Your lips, the shyer lover's bane,
I take with disputation none,
And am your kinsman in disdain
When all is excellently done.

A CHRISTMAS NIGHT

CHRIST for a dream was given from the dead
To walk one Christmas night on earth again,
Among the snow, among the Christmas bells.
He heard the hymns that are his praise: *Noel,*
And *Christ is Born*, and *Babe of Bethlehem.*
He saw the travelling crowds happy for home,
The gathering and the welcome, and the set
Feast and the gifts, because he once was born,
Because he once was steward of a word.
And so he thought, "The spirit has been kind;
So well the peoples might have fallen from me,
My way of life being difficult and spare.
It is beautiful that a dream in Galilee
Should prosper so. They crucified me once,
And now my name is spoken through the world,
And bells are rung for me and candles burnt.
They might have crucified my dream who used
My body ill; they might have spat on me
Always as in one hour on Golgotha." . . .
And the snow fell, and the last bell was still,
And the poor Christ again was with the dead.

INVOCATION

As pools beneath stone arches take
  Darkly within their deeps again
Shapes of the flowing stone, and make
  Stories anew of passing men,

So let the living thoughts that keep,
  Morning and evening, in their kind,
Eternal change in height and deep,
  Be mirrored in my happy mind.

Beat, world, upon this heart, be loud
  Your marvel chanted in my blood,
Come forth, O sun, through cloud on cloud
  To shine upon my stubborn mood.

Great hills that fold above the sea,
  Ecstatic airs and sparkling skies,
Sing out your words to master me,
  Make me immoderately wise.

IMMORTALITY

I

When other beauty governs other lips,
And snowdrops come to strange and happy springs,
When seas renewed bear yet unbuilded ships,
And alien hearts know all familiar things,
When frosty nights bring comrades to enjoy
Sweet hours at hearths where we no longer sit,
When Liverpool is one with dusty Troy,
And London famed as Attica for wit . . .
How shall it be with you, and you, and you,
How with us all who have gone greatly here
In friendship, making some delight, some true
Song in the dark, some story against fear?
Shall song still walk with love, and life be brave,
And we, who were all these, be but the grave?

II

No; lovers yet shall tell the nightingale
Sometimes a song that we of old time made,
And gossips gathered at the twilight ale
Shall say, "Those two were friends," or,
"Unafraid
Of bitter thought were those because they loved
Better than most." And sometimes shall be
told
How one, who died in his young beauty, moved,
As Astrophel, those English hearts of old.
And the new seas shall take the new ships home
Telling how yet the Dymock orchards stand,
And you shall walk with Julius at Rome,
And Paul shall be my fellow in the Strand;
There in the midst of all those words shall be
Our names, our ghosts, our immortality.

THE CRAFTSMEN

Confederate hand and eye
Work to the chisel's blade,
Setting the grain aglow
Of porch and sturdy beam—
So the strange gods may ply
Strict arms till we are made
Quick as the gods who know
What builds behind this dream.

PETITION

O Lord, I pray: that for each happiness
My housemate brings I may give back no less
Than all my fertile will;

That I may take from friends but as the stream
Creates again the hawthorn bloom adream
Above the river sill;

That I may see the spurge upon the wall
And hear the nesting birds give call to call,
Keeping my wonder new;

That I may have a body fit to mate
With the green fields, and stars, and streams in spate,
And clean as clover-dew;

That I may have the courage to confute
All fools with silence when they will dispute,
All fools who will deride;

That I may know all strict and sinewy art
As that in man which is the counterpart,
Lord, of Thy fiercest pride;

That somehow this beloved earth may wear
A later grace for all the love I bear,
For some song that I sing;

That, when I die, this word may stand for me—
He had a heart to praise, an eye to see,
And beauty was his king.

I thank the Editors of *The Cambridge Magazine*, *Country Life*, *The Englishwoman*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *The New Witness*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Sphere*, and *To-Day*, by whom some of these poems were first printed

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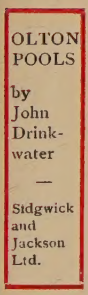
OLTON
POOLS
by
John
Drink-
water
—
Stdgwick
and
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